

Helping Your Child Navigate a Violent Death in the Community

- Parent Information Presentation
- For informational purposes only

Purpose of This Presentation

- Provide guidance for parents
- Support children after hearing about a violent death
- Offer tools for honest, age-appropriate conversations
- Share signs your child may need extra support

What Children May Be Hearing

- Children often learn information from peers, social media, and older siblings
- Details may be inaccurate or frightening
- Children may feel confused, scared, or unsafe

How Elementary-Aged Children Understand Death

- Younger children think in concrete terms
- They may ask repeated questions
- They may worry about their own safety or their family's safety
- They may struggle to express emotions verbally

Why Talking Openly Matters

- Prevents misinformation
- Builds emotional safety
- Helps children process fear
- Shows children they are supported

How to Start the Conversation

- Choose a calm moment
- Ask what your child already knows
- Listen more than you talk
- Avoid overwhelming details

What to Say (Age-Appropriate Language)

- Someone in our community died because of an unsafe situation
- It is okay to feel sad, scared, or confused
- Adults are working to keep everyone safe at home, in school and in Sayville
- You are safe right now

What to Avoid Saying

- Avoid graphic details
- Avoid blaming language
- Avoid making promises that nothing bad will ever happen
- Avoid sharing adult-level fears
- Be mindful of conversations that children can overhear

Common Reactions in Children

- Increased anxiety or clinginess
- Trouble sleeping
- Emotional outbursts
- Regressive behaviors
- Physical complaints

How Parents Can Help at Home

- Maintain daily routines
- Offer extra reassurance
- Encourage questions
- Model calm behavior
- Limit exposure to news and social media

When to Seek Additional Support

- Persistent fear or sadness
- Behavior changes lasting more than a few weeks
- School avoidance
- Frequent physical complaints with no medical cause

School Support Available

- Elementary and Middle School Buildings will not be addressing incident. However, social workers and school psychologists and counselors are available if needed
- Individual and group support options at HS level
- Parents may contact the school for concerns

Suggested responses to Answer Tough Questions

- Why did this happen? “We don’t know and that’s what makes this so hard.”
- Is it going to happen to me? “Right now you are safe and there are people in the school and community whose whole job it is to keep you safe”
- Where is the person now? Based on family beliefs
- What does murdered mean? “Murder is when one person takes the life of another”
- If child keeps asking about “What ifs” bring them back to the present moment and concrete facts

Safety and Reassurance

- Reinforce safety plans
- Identify safe adults
- Review who to go to for help
- Focus on protective factors

Supporting Emotional Expression

- Encourage drawing, journaling, play
- Validate feelings
- Teach simple coping skills (deep breathing, calm-down strategies)

Taking Care of Yourself as a Parent

- Children sense adult emotions
- Seek your own support if needed
- It is okay to not have all the answers

Important Reminders

- Grief looks different for every child
- There is no “right” reaction
- Support may be needed at different stages and has no timeline

Community and Crisis Resources

- School PPS staff
- Local mental health agencies
 - Ask building PPS for referrals
- Grief online resource
 - <https://www.dougy.org>
- Crisis hotlines if immediate support is needed
 - 988 - Crisis Hotline
 - DASH - 631-952-3333

Questions & Discussion

- We are here to support you and your family